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The CIA's Special Problem

CPYRGHT

SEN. Sam Ervin's campaign against government intrusion into the private lives of federal employees is, on the whole, a worthwhile enterprise, brought on by the officiousness of overzealous personnel officers. But it seems to us that the Senator is being a trifle stiff-necked about the Central Intelligence Agency's request for a special dispensation in its relations with its employees.

True enough, the CIA has been granted authority to inquire into the private lives of its workers in a committee amendment. But it can do so only if the director of the agency specifically concludes that the national security is sufficiently involved for him to waive the general rule against inquiry into the private life of an employee. This seems unduly cumbersome in an agency where virtually all employees are involved in

sensitive work. Even the floor sweepers (perhaps especially the floor sweepers) must be thoroughly checked out for vulnerability to blackmail.

It is not appropriate for any agency to get into too much detail about the private life of its employees. But such agencies as the National Security Agency and the CIA must be free to make routine inquiries into the lives of persons who are about to be assigned jobs where their country's security is at stake. The CIA, after all, is not just another agency.

If he is too unbending on the security agencies' special problems, Sen. Ervin may endanger the whole concept behind his bill. This would be most unfortunate, for it is an important bill. It can be protected by a little flexibility on the part of Sen. Ervin.